

PRO RESUMES MADE EASY

Pro Resumes Made Easy~

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Andrea Drew formed Impressive Resumes in 1998 and the business grew steadily over 13 years before Andrea sold the business to new management. She has an enjoyment of the English language, and a lifetime passion for writing, which she uses in the preparation and writing of resumes, copywriting and other entrepreneurial endeavours. With a background in Human Resources and Recruitment, Andrea has worked in helping people with jobs since 1992. Her roles included: culling CV's, arranging interviews, assessing resumes; writing marketing material; writing tenders; editing, proofreading and rewriting large documents. Andrea is currently studying prior to gaining accreditation as a Certified Advanced Resume Writer and is a member of Career Directors International and the Association of Online Resume and Career Professionals.

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NB: As I am an Australian, I have used Australian or UK spelling throughout the document. This includes spelling or words such as organization (US spelling) as organisation (Australian spelling) and Defence (US spelling) as Defence (UK/Australian spelling). So before you berate me for a spelling error, please check that this is simply not due to the different spelling in different countries!

Chapter 1 – Some basics

What is the purpose of a resume? If you ask most people, they will tell you it is “to get a job interview.” Yes, that’s right it *is* designed to get you a job interview. But a resume is also designed to sell you, or generate enough interest in you to make the reader make contact and schedule a meeting time. Your resume has had enough impact, that out of the hundreds of resumes a recruiter receives in their email inbox daily, yours has stood out.

If you’ve heard the saying that recruiter’s look at most resumes for between 5 and 20 seconds, it’s true. Add to that equation the fact that resumes are now received via email inbox, and you need to consider the fact that this means that the top third of your first page will be the first thing the recruiter sees when they click open the attachment.

I’ll be running you through the step by step process I use when writing a resume.

My resumes are written in a way that they;

- a) Catch the recruiters eye immediately
- b) Give them a reason to keep on reading
- c) Stand out by writing them in a way that only 5% of all job applicants use effectively; and
- d) Works with scanning software sometimes used by recruiters
- e) Makes the reader want to meet with you!

Chapter 2 – First part of the resume writing process - planning

I'm sure most of you have lots and lots of questions including what headings to use, how long should it be, and do I include an objective and similar questions.

In my 11 years of writing resumes professionally, I've lost count of the number of questions that I have been asked about resumes.

Honestly, I think the best way to do this is for me to go through my resume writing process step by step, and then, when we're done, I'll include a list of possible questions and answers that may be still unanswered at the end of this book, OK? How does that sound? Good. OK, here we go.

The first thing to understand is that you don't need to include the word resume or curriculum vitae (CV) as a title within the document. What you are really telling the recruiter in doing so is that you really do think they are thick as two short planks, and that they are so dumb they don't even realise that this is your resume. No, don't go there. By the same token, you don't need headings or identifications such as name, address, telephone. It is obvious what they are! Surely people aren't that dumb? (Hold your tongue!)

Most resumes I see (and I have seen thousands) fall into the "shopping list" resume category. That is, they are a hastily written

document scribbled down, and it is just a list of boring, general descriptions which mean little. The problem with this type of document is that it only describes the sort of duties that anyone in that position could do. There is nothing in there that markets you as a unique individual with value to bring to the potential employer.

Usually, when a client purchases a resume writing package online, they also upload their current CV to me. At this point I acknowledge receipt of their payment and documents, and ask them to complete my in-house questionnaire.

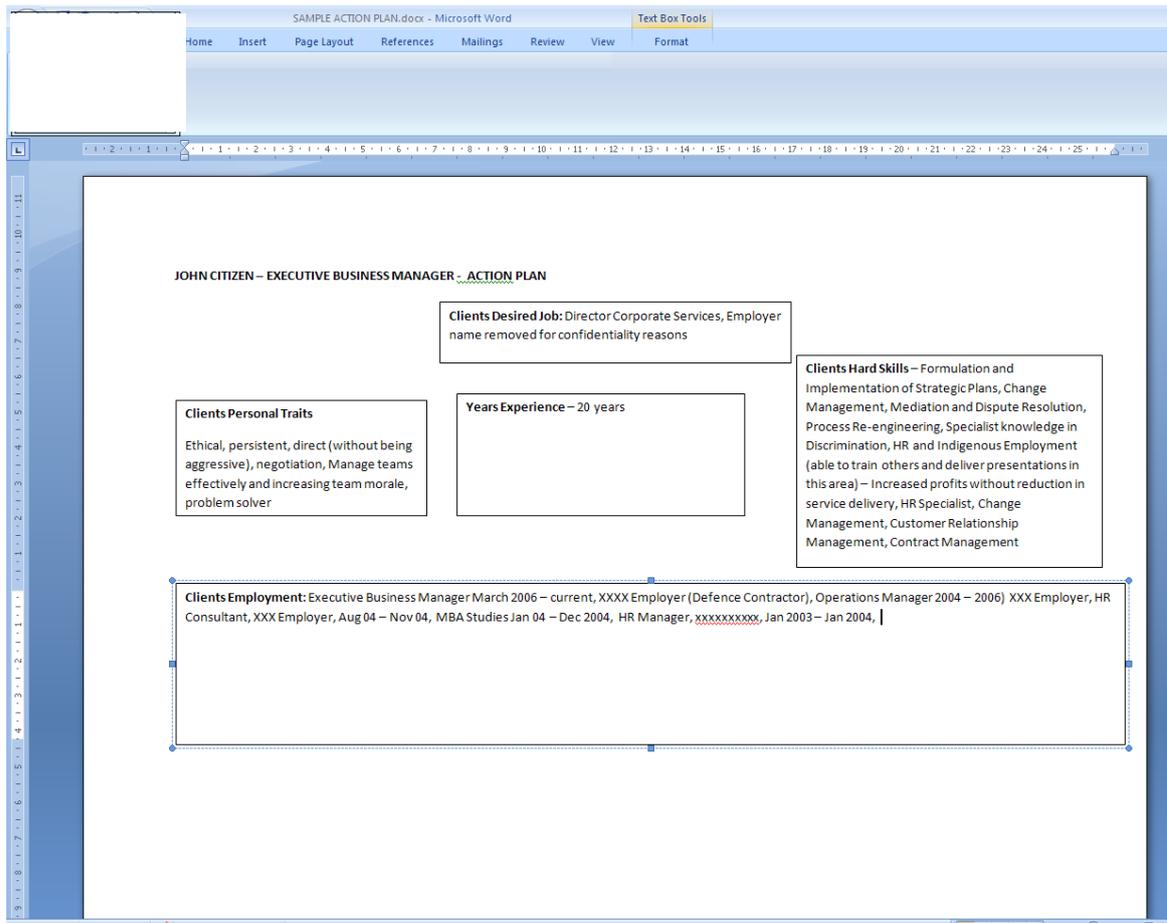
Why do I do this?

Well most resumes are what I have rather cheekily termed “shopping list” resumes. That is, a quickly scribbled dry boring very general list of functions and responsibilities.

This does nothing to market the candidate, and actually really only talks about the types of functions anyone within that position could perform. A resume needs to talk about why you are different. What challenges or problems did you face, no matter how small? What did you do to solve these problems? And (hopefully) what was the fantastic result?

It is this information that I am really looking for when sending the questionnaire to a client. I also send them a video to guide them as to the “resume gold” that I am digging for.

Once I receive this, I get to work. I'm going to show you my process from start to finish, using the case study of "Angela" but firstly the planning stage. I usually write an action plan as this makes it easier to write the resume. It doesn't need to have all the boxes and look beautiful so long as you have the information there to work with. Here is a sample:



So you can see there I have the person's name - their position title, the position they are aiming for or targeting and their personal traits. Similarly I list the number of years' experience they have, as well as their "hard skills." These are their skills that I will be using to formulate a list of keywords within the resume, more on that to come. Hard skills list should only include those skills and ability that can be backed up by evidence. General skills are something most job

seekers use a lot of; I see lots of words such as “team player” and “excellent organisational and prioritisation abilities” and most readers will scan over these if they look general without hard evidence.

What the job seeker doesn't realise is that almost every other job seeker out there has done the same. Of course they don't realise this, as they don't get to see lots of CVs as I do (and lots of recruiters do) and so these statements lose impact. Statements such as “Contract Negotiation” and “Process re-engineering” or “Profit Maximisation” where this is backed up with evidence is much more powerful and makes the reader sit up and take notice, even if just for the fact that they very rarely see a resume of this kind.

Keywords are something that are not only used to attract the readers' attention, particularly in a situation where a recruiter is scanning through hundreds of resumes; they are also occasionally picked up by computer scanning software. Not all recruitment companies use this software, but those that do are able to search across their entire database of say 20,000 resumes through scanning for several keywords which may be for example, FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) or Contract Negotiations. So including “hard skills” here within the keywords section serves a dual purpose in that these words listed on the first page could more than likely assist you in gaining an interview, months after registering with a recruitment company. A position comes along, they interviewed you six months

ago for a different position, and they registered your CV on their database and do a search and bang, up comes your resume in their search results months later!

Getting back to the action plan and resume writing, the second page of the action plan is where I plan the “meat” of the resume or achievements.

I use a tried and true method of CAR or Challenge, Action, Results. Here what I am doing is splitting up achievements into chunks to make sense of these prior to writing the resume. You will see here that these make up the bulk of the job seekers “story” and really demonstrate their skills:

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document with the following content:

Target – Director Corporate Service (Financial, Administrative, IT and HR)

CHALLENGE	ACTION	RESULT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of shared purpose amongst staff, four departments all working hard but efforts disjointed and haphazardLow staff morale, dissatisfaction with pay levelsOngoing dispute between two staff members, affecting entire team who were taking sidesManager (customer representative) within the workplace, (ex-military) had bullying aggressive style which was affecting staff morale as he believed my team were “only contractors”Tenders for project work not being effectively managed with customer complaining – complaints were justified	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strategic Planning Review – several meetings took place, review distributed to staff. Met with resistance due to perceived increase in workload, involved staff to gain 90% commitment – arranged meetings so staff could “vent” – facilitated sessions to demonstrate how sharing of information needed to be reciprocal (i.e. other depts., customer) – arranging training sessions in customer service and dealing with difficult people for managers and supervisorsPrepared and presented case to HR Manager to secure retention bonuses for key staff. Suggested alternate strategies for improving staff take home pay including salary sacrifice of rental paymentsFacilitated a mediation session, allowing each staff member to express their concerns.Spoke to Manager professionally about this behaviour, informing him that his behaviour was unacceptable and would not be toleratedArranged for myself and two others within Facilities department to be trained in defence’s procurement guidelines, then implemented these into all project processes including identifying exact scope of work, using correct forms and processes throughout tender process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two supervisors struggling with change resigned, Staff turnover reduced from 30% to 5%, Profit increased by 3% as well as adding 4 additional resources across the contract, Finance and Facilities depts. Held their own strategic planning sessions using my principles to ensure uniform message, resulting in late invoicing and debtor’s payments reduced from 60% to 5%Reduction in staff turnover (refer above) and increased staff satisfactionBoth staff recognised situation caused by previously unresolved misunderstanding, agreed to put differences aside and maintain a level of professionalism at work, resulting in more cohesive and calmer teamManager took comments on board, and my staff noticed a dramatic improvement in his behaviourAdditional \$3 million of work managed from writing scope of work through tender process and to financial completion for year 2007/2008 – on time and on budget. By 2008/2009 this was done without my input

Page: 2 of 3 | Words: 854 | English (Australia)

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Here you can see the challenge, action result planning in action. As the above text is a little small, I thought I'd include a few of them here:

Challenge

- Lack of shared purpose amongst staff, four departments all working hard but efforts disjointed and haphazard

Action

- Strategic Planning Review – several meetings took place, review distributed to staff. Met with resistance due to perceived increase in workload, involved staff to gain 90% commitment – arranged meetings so staff could “vent” – facilitated sessions to demonstrate how sharing of information needed to be reciprocal (i.e. other depts., customer) – arranging training sessions in customer service and dealing with difficult people for managers and supervisors

Result

- Two supervisors struggling with change resigned, Staff turnover reduced from 30% to 5%, Profit increased by 3% as well as adding 4 additional resources across the contract, Finance and Facilities depts. Held their own strategic planning sessions using my principles to ensure uniform message, resulting in late invoicing and debtor's payments reduced from 60% to 5%

As you can see this is my rough “internal” text. From here it is a matter of tight phrasing, trying to get the salient points across to the reader without being too drawn out and long winded.

In this case the CAR approach became these two bullet points one after the other:

- Instigated and rolled out a series of strategic planning review meetings with outcomes distributed to staff. Allowed staff to communicate frustrations and concerns whilst simultaneously facilitating training sessions in customer service, and dealing with difficult people. Staff turnover reduced dramatically from 30% to 5% with a marked upsurge in morale and a more cohesive unit.
- Increased profit by 3% whilst adding five additional resources across the contract through formulation and rollout of strategic planning, staff training, facilitating staff meetings and demonstrating how improvements could be made

Here's another example of how a rough CAR planning point became a selling point within the resume:

Challenge:

- Tenders for project work not being effectively managed with customer complaining – complaints were justified

Action:

- Arranged for myself and two others within Facilities department to be trained in defence's procurement guidelines, then implemented these into all project processes including Identifying exact scope of work, using correct forms and processes throughout tender process

Result:

- Additional \$3 million of work managed from writing scope of work through tender process and to financial completion for

year 2007/2008 – on time and on budget. By 2008/2009 this was done without my input

Which when rewritten became the following:

- Recognised poor management of tenders for project work resulting in disgruntled client. Arranged two staff and myself to be trained in formal Defence procurement guidelines, implementing these into all project processes. Subsequently managed an additional \$3 million in project work (estimated \$7m in 2010/2011 financial year) throughout the entire tender process, enabling staff in following years to manage this process with minimal input

Chapter 3 – Layout and writing the resume

So now we have done our planning, we can get to writing. Remembering our earlier example, Angela is a graduate nurse, passionate about midwifery. She is trying to gain entry into this program. But her existing resume is just like so many others I see, boring, ho hum, plain and in my opinion pretty useless (sorry Angela but I am sure you would agree with me 😊)

Right, well here is a snippet of the first section of the first page of her resume as it was:

CURRICULUM VITAE

Ashleigh Confidential
9 Example Street
xxxxxxxxxxx
12345
0411 234 567
helpme@noidea.com.au

So what's wrong with that? You might be thinking. Well, here's what's wrong with it. Firstly, why does it need a heading or title of "Curriculum Vitae?" Shouldn't it be obvious to the reader what this is, after all they've already received an email in response to a job ad (most of the time) so the recruiter should know that you aren't sending them the latest cricket scores.

Unless, you really are desperately trying to tell the recruiter that you think they are stupid. No? I didn't think so.

The second thing is that this doesn't really stand out to me. Keep in mind that I was a recruiter in a previous life. Picture this. Your manager has put you in charge of the advertising and screening process for 30 positions. Each position receives between 100 and 1000 applications including cover letters and resumes. So you really do only give each application about 5 to 30 seconds, meaning that the resume has to stand out immediately.

Combine this information with the fact that over the last eleven years I have looked at countless thousands of resumes, and I can assure you that most resumes look exactly like the "before" resume listed here. Bland, boring, non-descript. When I write the resumes, I try to incorporate in the very top section of the document:

- a) Contact details of the candidate:
- b) A quick idea for the recruiter as to what sort of candidate they are dealing with e.g. Results focussed Accountant seeking auditors role (or similar)
- c) 6-8 bullet points of "hard" skills

You can see below how I rewrote the very beginning of this clients resume:

ANGELA SIMPSON

Address removed for confidentiality reasons

Email: 123@123.com

Home: (01) 2345 6789 • Mobile: 0123 456 789

STUDENT/GRADUATE NURSE DRAWN TO MIDWIFERY

- Anticipated NSW Nursing Registration (List A) December 2009
- Women's health primarily pregnancy and birth
- Gynaecology and urology ward exposure
- Emergency Response tactician
- Received accolades for nursing essays
- Computer proficient (MS Office/Internet/Intermediate to Advanced)

A couple of things to remember:

1. Only list “hard” skills. You may notice above I have listed these, which I discovered via Angela’s questionnaire. Don’t, don’t please don’t include wishy washy statements such as “effective team skills” “outstanding communication” “ability to prioritise and manage time” I see these sorts of general meaningless statements all the time. Trust me, 99% of all resumes I see make these sorts of claims which, without evidence mean nothing! Every man and his dog will claim they have these skills.
2. Don’t go overboard with fancy graphics, fonts or layout. I say stick to black and white, with a regular font or typeface such as Arial or similar. Yes, use bullets and bold or underline for emphasis, but don’t go overboard. If you are using these for emphasis, they are no longer emphasised if the entire page is bold, or 75% or 50% of it is. Get the idea? Use bolding or underlining or italics sparingly and only where definitely

needed. Also if you use bullets ensure these are uniform throughout the document and well formatted

From here you need to continue writing the resume, as outlined in the previous chapter, and using the CAR approach. Once your resume is completed, including an education and references section, have someone that you trust look over the resume to hopefully give an objective opinion. (Including me – refer to bonus section)

To read the rest of the ebook go to <http://career-chick.com.au/resume-ebook/>